do you harm. I—I could not bear that."

"You do care then! I am something to you?"

"Of course I care; I should be a strange girl if I did not. You are much to me; so much you must guard yourself."

"For your sake?"

She did not hesitate.

"Yes—for my sake. You promise me?"

In the dark I bent down and pressed my cheek to her own, and, to my surprise, she made no effort to draw away.

"That is a custom in my country," I said gravely, half fearing she might be offended, "the symbol of a pledge."

"I understand," and she stood very straight facing me. "This night has broken down every conventional barrier. It has changed me; I cannot feel or think as I could yesterday. I do not know what legerdemain has been resorted to, Monsieur, but I am not the same girl you first met; all of life looks different. Perhaps you can tell me sometime how such a miraculous change could occur in a single night. So I accept your pledge," and she gave me both hands, "just as you offer it. Now we are partners, as they say out West. Is not that it, Monsieur."

"Partners? perhaps I do not comprehend that term; you mean friends?"

"Even more than friends; associated together for a purpose; trusting each other. You know now?"

"Yes, and we will go at once and learn our fate—as—as partners."

It may have been a hundred feet to the hangar, grass-covered, but somewhat rough. I could not help thinking how difficult it would be to start the monoplane if the field beyond was equally irregular, yet surely it would not be; the mechanics would have chosen better, and besides, as I remembered from my brief visit in the afternoon there was nothing to criticise. We saw nothing, heard nothing, as we drew closer to the black bulk of building, and groped our way along its side, endeavoring to locate the shed to the north. The door, as I vaguely recalled, was to the east, and I left her at the corner, concealed by the dense shadow, and crept cautiously forward alone, feeling along the rough boards for the latch. It opened noiselessly enough, but the darkness within was intense. So dim was my recollectiom of the place that I was almost afraid to stir lest I might disturb something and create an alarm. In the silence I became aware of someone stirring not far away, and waited anxiously, seeking to locate the sound. In the silence I could distinguish heavy breathing, and then a noise which made me think of a body rolling in the floor. I stepped within, feeling with both hands and feet, but encountered nothing until I touched a work bench against the opposite wall. As I stood there, facing about, staring into the black void, I could locate the breathing to my right.

"Who is there? answer!" I exclaimed, bending forward.

There was no reply, only a recurrence of struggle, and, after a moment of indecision, I felt my way along the bench, and came in contact with the figure of a man lying in the floor. Again I spoke sternly, gripping his shoulder in my fingers, but received no reply. Suspecting that, whoever the fellow might be, he was gagged and helpless, for my hand already discovered a strand of rope about his arm, I felt for his face. There was a cloth in his mouth, bound tightly into place by a handkerchief knotted behind his head. Whoever the man might be, he was evidently no ally of Brandt's to receive such treatment, and I slashed the linen with the aid of his pocket knife. He gasped painfully, gulping down great draughts of air.

"Who are you?"

"De Vigne," he gasped. "Is this you, Monsieur?"

"Yes—here let me cut these ropes first of all. I understand what has without happened explanation at present. How long have you been lying here?"

"Maybe fifteen minutes, but it seems longer; I cannot tell. There was a fight."

"O course. The fellows found you asleep?"

"Yes, Monsieur. There was a watch outside, and I did not expect trouble. Ramon was away, and I sat up late waiting for him to return. Then I became sleepy and lay down, perhaps about midnight. But first I went out, and saw the guard was all right. There were no orders, Monsieur, for me to remain on watch."

"I do not blame you, De Vigne; the happenings of this night could not have been anticipated by any of us. Can you sit up? Good; now rise to your feet, and exercise your limbs a little. Don't make any noise. How are you? all right?"

"Only a little stiff, Monsieur, and my head hurts where I was clubbed. I don't remember what happened after that blow, until I woke up in here."

"Do you know how many attacked you?"

"There were four, Monsieur—one big fellow who spoke in German, but did not touch me; he just gave orders. One man had a cap on like a chauffeur, a leather cap; he was short, but strong like a bull; he had my throat like this, Monsieur, and it hurt me to breathe; and the man who hit me was the guard—I knew his face."

"There was a light then?"

"Always; it burned all night long."

"I could see none from the outside when I came up. Have those men gone?"

"No, Monsieur; I heard voices just before you came—in there, not far from the door. Maybe they put out the the light, so it will not be seen. The big man he carry an electric bulb—perhaps they use that. You know them, Monsieur? You know why they come here?"

"Do I, De Vigne! They have led me a merry chase since yesterday, but we have broken even so far. The big man is named Brandt, a member of the German Secret Service."

"Captain Brandt, Monsieur?"

You have heard of him them? Yes, that's the fellow; the others are fellows in his pay. You can guess what they are after."

"The monoplane; the secret of the engine, Monsieur. Sacre, yes!"

"And that they are in earnest about it—even to murder."

"You mean they kill?"

"I mean they have killed. Ramon is dead; I saw his body."

"Mon Dieu! Why they not kill me?"

"Probably they did not intend killing him. He was tied as you were, but was drunk, and may have suffocated. These men know he is dead, however, and realize the desperate situation they are in. They will not hesitate now at any crime to attain their purpose and escape. They even sought to have me arrested for the murder."

"You, Monsieur?"

"Yes; I want you to understand the exact situation. I am here fleeing from the police, under charges concocted by Brandt to save himself. He believes I am hidden somewhere waiting a chance to get out of the city. That is why he came here with his gang, knowing you were alone. It looked easy, for the watchman was in his pay, Ramon dead, and I fleeing from the police. You were all he had left to oppose him. Now he has got you, he will feel safe, and grow careless. The fact that he did not even have a man stationed outside, or left to guard the auto, proves how confident he is. He never dreams that I dear come here."

De Vigne breathed heavily, and swore.

"You would fight, Monsieur?"

"Yes, two against four; not such bad odds, with the surprise in our favor. You like that?"

"It will be good sport," and the soldier rubbed his hands together. "When we begin?"

"Presently; there is a bit to do first. Is the monoplane ready to fly?"

"*Oui*, Monsieur."

"Plenty of gasoline? Provisions packed away? Oiled and tested?"

"*Oui*, Monsieur. Yesterday I saw to it all."

"And the ground in front—is it level and smooth? Have you been over it?"

"It is as a board, Monsieur, maybe four hundred feet—yes," with enthusiasm. "They play ze game baseball here, and it all hard like rock. The wheels run fine."

"Good enough. That was the way I recalled it. Now listen. We haven't got much time before daylight. As soon as we locate those fellows we will go for them swift and hard. Have you a revolver?"

"There is one in the drawer behind you, Monsieur."

"Put it in your pocket; I have one of my own. Now remember this—there is to be no killing, no shooting, if it can be possibly avoided. The more quietly we can accomplish this business the better. What I want to do is to drive the whole four back into that southwest corner, and make them prisoners. You get the idea?"

"*Oui*, Monsieur."

"If we get between them and the front, there is no way for them to get out, unless they rush us. They are probably armed, but if we get the drop on them first, I do not think they will fight. Brandt is the dangerous one—you leave him to me, and keep your gun on the others. Beyond that, obey orders."

He stood very straight in the dark and his hand came up in salute.

"*Oui*, Monsieur."

"As soon as they are secured we will run out the machine; if we cannot do it ourselves, we will compel that Pinkerton man to help."

"You will fly? now, in the dark?"

"Yes; it is the only way I can prevent being arrested, as the police watch all railway stations; and if I take the machine away Brandt cannot study its mechanism."

"And I go with you?"

"No, De Vigne, I have a passenger. You remain here; release the prisoners as soon as it is daylight. Then go direct to the French Consul, and make a report. He will tell you what to do."

He stood silent, shaking his head, clearly dissatisfied.

"You are a soldier?"

"*Oui*, Monsieur."

"Then do as I say. I cannot take you; there is a lady here who will make the trip with me."

"A lady, Monsieur!" the surprise in his voice making me smile.

"Exactly; she is outside now, and I am going to bring her in here. Do not forget again, De Vigne, that you are under my orders."

"*Non*, Monsieur.''

"Very good; now stand where you are until I come back."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Flight in the Dark.

I found her without difficulty, and hastily whispered into her ear the story of my meeting with De Vigne. In response she said there were men in the big shed; she had seen gleams of light showing through the crack of the big door, and had even crept up close enough to hear movements within. Once the muffled sound of a voice reached her ears, and although it was impossible to distinguish words, she was convinced the language employed was German.

"You have seen no one outside?" I asked, "no sign of any guard?"

"No I have told you all. Is it not strange they should be so reckless?"

"Brandt believes I am frightened away by the police. He thinks my only present purpose is to escape arrest, and it has never occurred to him that I might utilize the monoplane. He is not an aeronaut, and will not understand the possibility. I am the only person they have any cause to fear now that Ramon is dead and De Vigne a prisoner. Come with me inside."

She accompanied me without hesitancy into the blackness of the shed, but I kept my hand on her arm, guiding her across until we reached the work-bench at the opposite side. Dark as it was without, yet the open door gave us a bit of starlight to relieve the gloom.

"Where are you, De Vigne?" I questioned, in a whisper, unable to distinguish his form.

"Here, Monsieur, waiting your orders."

"Your revolver; it is loaded?"

"Yes."

"And the door into the hangar; how is it secured?"

"With a wooden latch, Monsieur; it can be opened without noise."

"Very good; now, Mademoiselle, you will remain here, in this corner, where the work-bench will protect you until I come back. You will obey?"

"Surely yes," she answered. "I have promi ed."

"I know, and trust you. There may be a fight, but we shall have the advantage. All I ask is, do not expose yourself."

"But, Monsieur, what about yourself? Think what it would mean to

Pasque—Florida

Continued from page 4.

Blue was the sky and water; her eyes were bluer; white as the sands her bare arms glimmered. Was it a sunbeam caught entangled in her burnished hair, or a stray strand, that burnod far on the water.

Darrow dropped his eyes; and when again he looked, the canoe had vanished behind the rushes of Flyover Point, and there was nothing moving on the water far as the eye could see.

About three o'clock that afternoon, the pigeon-toed Seminole Indian who followed Haltren, as a silent, dangerous dog follows its master, laid down the heavy pink cedar log which he had brought to the fire, and stood perfectly silent, nose up, slitted eyes almost closed.

Haltren's glance was a question.

"Paddl'um boat," said the Indian, sullenly.

After a pause Haltren said, "I don't hear it, Tiger."

"Hunh!" grunted the Seminole. "Paddl'um damn slow. Bime-by you hear."

And bime-by Haltren heard.

"Somebody is landing," he said.

The Indian folded his arms and stood bolt upright for a moment; then. "Hunh! he muttered, disgusted. "Heap squaw. Tiger will go."

Haltren did not hear him; up the palmetto-choked trail from the landing strolled a girl, paddle poised over one shoulder, bright hair blowing. He rose to his feet; she saw him standing in haze of the fire and made him a pretty gesture of recognition.

"I thought I'd call to pay my respects" she said. "How do you do? May I sit on this soap box?"

Smiling, she laid the paddle on the ground and held out one hand as he stepped forward.

They shook hands very civilly.

"That was a brave thing you did," she said. "Mes compliments, monsieur."

And that was all said about the wreck.

"It's not unlike an Adirondack camp," she suggested, looking around at the open-faced, palm-thatched shanty with its smoky, tin-pan bric-a-brac.

Her blue eyes swept all in rapid review—the guns leaning against the tree; the bunch of dead bluebill ducks hanging beyond; the improvised table and bench outside; the enormous mottled rattlesnake skin tacked lengthways on a live oak.

"Are there many of those about?" she inquired.

"Very few"—he waited to control the voice which did not sound much like his own—"very few rattlers yet. They come out later."

"That's amiable of them," she said, with a slight shrug of her shoulders.

There was a pause.

"I hope you are well," he ventured.

"Perfectly—and thank you. I hope you are well, Jack."

Continued on page 11.